

Just Over the Line...

Crossing County Lines in Nonmetro Utah

The average Utah worker spends 21 minutes getting to the job each day, according to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Long commutes are not uncommon for workers who live outside the Wasatch Front and are unable to find work in their home counties or for those who prefer a country living but have city jobs. A new tool provided by the U.S. Census Bureau promises to help us quantify commuting patterns between towns, counties and even across state lines. In addition, it can help us understand the worker characteristics in a particular area like never before.

This map-based interface tool is called Local Employment Dynamics "OnTheMap." This is a web-based mapping and reporting application that shows where people work and where workers live. It also provides companion reports on age, earnings, industry distributions and local workforce indicators. Here are just a few of the questions this tool can answer:

- Where do the workers live who are employed in a particular user-defined area?
- What are the workplace destinations for workers living in a particular community or neighborhood?
- What are the worker ages, annual earnings or industries in different areas? How has an area changed over time?
- How many jobs are located within five, ten, and twenty miles of a proposed factory?

The graphic accompanying this article is just one example of the information this tool can provide. OnTheMap indicates that during the second quarter of 2004, the nonmetro counties with the highest level of workers leaving the county for employment include Morgan, Wasatch, Piute, Tooele, and Juab counties. With the exception of Piute County (where jobs, in general, are scarce), these counties all lie on the fringe of the Wasatch Front.

On the other end of the spectrum, Garfield, San Juan, Wayne, Beaver, and Daggett counties show the lowest levels of out-commuting. Not surprisingly, these are counties which are geographically isolated.

While few workers are leaving Garfield County for employment elsewhere, this area has the highest share of in-commuting in the state. Rich, Emery, Daggett and Summit counties also entice a high percentage of workers across county borders for employment. On the other hand, Carbon, Kane, Sevier, Uintah, and Grand counties draw the smallest share of workers from other counties.

Data Issues

Currently, the OnTheMap tool does not include federal government workers or the self-employed. However, the Census Bureau is currently working on the inclusion of these two groups. And, yes, the data is quite old right now (second quarter 2004). However, new releases this summer should be updated with 2005 and 2006 information.

The Good News

OnTheMap not only provides worker-flow and profile information for counties, but for cities, along highways, across state borders, within a user-defined radius, or just wherever the user wants to draw a particular boundary. Already, it has allowed me to answer the previously unanswerable question about how many workers in the St. George area commute to Mesquite, Nevada for work.

Take time to visit the Local Employment Dynamics web site at the link below and take the OnTheMap tour to see how this information might be useful to you. ⓘ

For more information see: <http://lehd.did.census.gov/led/index.html>; Click on OnTheMap under Quick Links.

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Workers Leaving

the county for employment



Nonmetro Counties
With Largest Share
of Outcommuters:

Morgan
Wasatch
Piute
Tooele
Juab

Nonmetro Counties
With Smallest Share
of Outcommuters:

Garfield
San Juan
Wayne
Beaver
Daggett

Nonmetro Counties
With Largest Share of
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Workers Commuting

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